

Department of Health and Human Services

**OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**Health Care Anti-Fraud, Waste, and Abuse
Community Volunteer Program**

First Year Outcomes



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

To report on the first year performance of the Health Care Anti-Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Community Volunteer Demonstration Program.

BACKGROUND

Congress authorized the Health Care Anti-Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Community Volunteer Demonstration Program in the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriation Act of 1997 (P.L. 104-208) in order to further curb losses to the Medicare program. The Senate Committee believed that retired professionals, with appropriate training, could serve as educators and as resources to assist Medicare beneficiaries and others to detect and report fraud, waste, and abuse. To fund this program, the Senate Report (104-368) directed that \$2 million be transferred to the Administration on Aging (AoA) from the Health Care Financing Administration's research and demonstration budget. In May of 1997, AoA awarded grants to 12 organizations.

The Senate Report also directed AoA to consult with the Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the General Accounting Office to assess the performance of the program. In response, the OIG developed performance measures with the assistance of the 12 projects. This report is based on performance data reported by the projects for the first year of the program. These data are self-reported and were not independently verified.

FINDINGS

Recruiting and Training

The 12 projects recruited and trained a substantial number of individuals as Medicare educators and resources, although not all were retired professionals. In the first year, the projects collectively recruited and trained 3,682 trainers, at least 1,738 (47 percent) of whom were retired professionals.

Educating Seniors

The projects educated a large number of seniors about Medicare fraud. In total, the projects reported training nearly 41,800 Medicare beneficiaries and family members to detect and report suspected cases of health care fraud, waste, and abuse.

Community Awareness

The projects conducted other types of anti-fraud activities, making many in the community aware of Medicare fraud. The 12 projects generated a total of 386 public service announcements that reached an estimated 44 million individuals in the first year of the program. The projects also reported conducting 877 community education events that informed an estimated 263,000 seniors and members of the community.

Identified Referrals

The projects identified instances of potential fraud, waste, and abuse. As a result of their outreach activities, the projects received a total of 657 allegations of fraud, waste, or abuse that were referred to Medicare contractors or investigative agencies. Eighty-eight have been identified as potential overpayments. Four projects estimated that as much as \$1.16 million in Medicare funds may be recouped. The remaining eight projects were not able to identify any potential Medicare savings, perhaps because of the recency of some of the referrals or the difficulty of tracking these outcomes.

Range of Outcomes

The projects produced a wide range of outcomes in the first year. Several projects trained fewer than 40 seniors, whereas one project trained greater than 1,700 individuals. The number of allegations also varied, ranging from 1 to 200. These outcomes did not appear to be associated with the type of organization. Rather, grantees representing all three types of organizations including area agencies on aging, State units on aging, and private aging organizations, achieved results.

CONCLUSION

First year performance data reported by the 12 projects show that the projects recruited and trained volunteers, educated Medicare beneficiaries, and identified instances of potential fraud, waste, and abuse. The data also indicate that the individual projects had very different experiences which suggests that they adopted different approaches to recruiting and training volunteers or that some had slower starts than others.

Before a new round of grants is awarded, it is important to learn from projects' experiences. Such information will assist AoA in providing guidance to current and future projects and will improve performance and ensure quality outcomes. To do this, we will conduct an inspection that will identify and describe key implementation issues including what problems projects face and what practices work best. The report will also focus on curricula for training trainers, best practices for tracking trainers' activities and fraud allegations, and efforts to document outcomes.

Additionally, AoA needs to clarify guidance to projects about the extent to which they should focus their efforts on recruiting and training retired professionals and on investing time and resources in broader community education activities.